

LISTING OF THE CLAIMS

1. (Currently Amended) A system for monitoring guests in a network community, comprising:

an account database maintaining a plurality of resident accounts for a plurality of resident users of the network community, a resident account being allocated a limit on a number of guest slots that are available to be filled with guests having guest accounts sponsored by a resident user of the resident account, the resident user of the resident account being enabled to offer guest invitations for global membership to the network community to accept and establish a guest account to the network community sponsored by the resident user, the number of guest invitations enabled to be offered being greater than the number of guest slots available to be filled; and

an account server having at least memory and a processor, the account server updating availability of the guest slots associated with the respective resident account upon acceptance of a guest invitation by a guest making the acceptance and relaying the availability status to the resident user.

2. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 1, wherein the resident account sponsoring the guest account includes guest account information that includes a date upon which a guest invitation was sent to a respective guest and an end-date upon which the at least one guest account is scheduled to end.

3. (Original) The system of claim 2, wherein the guest account information in the respective resident account is updated to include a modification made to the end-date.

4. (Original) The system of claim 2, wherein the guest invitation is an email message.

5. (Original) The system of claim 2, wherein the guest invitation is an instant message.

6. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 1, wherein a status of the established guest account is updated in the respective resident account after the status of the guest account has changed.

7. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 1, wherein:
a provider of the network community offers a network service to members of the network community, the members comprising resident users and guests.

8. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 1, wherein:
the network community comprises an instant messaging community; and
a contact list of the respective resident user is updated with contact information of a user after a guest invitation is sent from the respective resident user to the user, wherein:

the contact information of the user is further updated if the user accepts the guest invitation;

the contact information of the user is removed from the contact list if the user declines the guest invitation;

the contact list of the respective resident user is made available to the guest.

9. (Currently Amended) The system of claim 1, further comprising:
a presence server maintaining presence information of members of the network community, wherein the presence server determines the presence information of the guest ~~user~~ from the status of the guest account of the guest ~~user~~, wherein the presence information includes a particular presence state that indicates that the guest account has not been activated.

10. (Currently Amended) A system for monitoring guest users of a network community, comprising:

means for storing a plurality of resident accounts for a plurality of resident users of the network community, a resident account being allocated a limit on a number of guest slots that are available to be filled with guest users having guest accounts sponsored by a resident user of the resident account, the resident user of the resident account being enabled to offer guest invitations for global membership to the network community to accept and establish a guest account to the network community sponsored by the resident user, the number of guest invitations enabled to be offered being greater than the number of guest slots available to be filled;

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means for updating a respective resident account with the status of the guest account sponsored by the resident user of the resident account; and

means for adding account information concerning the guest account to the respective resident account upon the generation of the guest account, wherein the account information includes a date upon which a guest invitation was sent to a respective guest user and an end-date upon which the guest account is scheduled to end; and

means for updating availability of the guest slots associated with the respective resident account upon acceptance of a guest invitation by a guest user making the acceptance and relaying the availability status to the resident user.

11. (Original) The system of claim 10, further comprising:

means for sending a guest invitation to a user from the respective resident user;
and

means for updating a contact list of the respective resident user with contact information of the user after the guest invitation is sent from the respective resident user to the user.

12. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 10, further comprising:

means for maintaining presence information of members of the network community, wherein the presence information of the guest user is determined from the status of the guest account of the guest user, wherein the presence information of the guest user is accessible by the respective resident user sponsoring the guest user.

13. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 10, further comprising:

means for notifying the guest user of a current status of the guest account of the guest user; and

means for notifying the respective resident user of the current status of the guest account of the guest user sponsored by the respective resident user.

14. (Currently Amended) A method for monitoring guest users of a network community, comprising:

maintaining a plurality of resident accounts for a plurality of resident users of the network community, a resident account being allocated a limit on a number of guest slots that are available to be filled with guest users having guest accounts sponsored by a resident user of the resident account, the resident user of the resident account being enabled to offer guest invitations for global membership to the network community to accept and establish a guest account to the network community sponsored by the resident user, the number of guest invitations enabled to be offered being greater than the number of guest slots available to be filled;

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updating a respective resident account with the status of the guest account sponsored by the resident user of the resident account; and

updating availability of the guest slots associated with the respective resident account upon acceptance of a guest invitation by a guest user making the acceptance and relaying the availability status to the resident user.

15. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 14, further comprising:
creating the guest account;

adding guest information regarding the guest account to the respective resident account upon the creation of the guest account, wherein the guest information includes identifying information of the guest account, wherein the guest information further includes an end-date upon which the guest account is scheduled to end;

updating the guest information to incorporate a modification made to the end-date, wherein the modification is initiated by one of a group comprising the guest user associated with the guest account and the respective resident user sponsoring the guest account.

16. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 14, further comprising:

updating the status of the guest account in the respective resident account if a user has accepted a guest invitation from the respective resident user of the respective resident account; and

updating the status of the guest account in the respective resident account if the user has declined the guest invitation from the respective resident user.

17. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 14, further comprising:

defining different representations for the status of the guest account;

updating the status of the guest account to a first representation if a user has accepted the guest invitation from the respective resident user and the respective resident user does not have a vacant guest slot available for the user; and

updating the status information of the guest account to a second representation if the user has accepted a guest invitation from the respective resident user and the user has successfully completed a procedure for setting-up the guest account of the user.

18. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 14, further comprising:

providing a network service to members of the network community, the members comprising resident users and guest users.

19. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 14, further comprising:
sending a guest invitation to a user from the respective resident user;
updating a contact list of the respective resident user with contact information of the user after the guest invitation is sent from the respective resident user to the user;
updating the contact information of the user with additional information provided by the user if the user accepts the guest invitation; and
removing the contact information of the user from the contact list if the user declines the guest invitation.

20. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 14, further comprising:
maintaining presence information on members of the network community, wherein members comprise resident users and guest users of the resident users;
determining presence information of the guest user based upon the status information in the guest account of the guest user; and
enabling the respective resident user sponsoring the guest user to access the presence information of the guest user.